

The Health Department is closely monitoring the rapid developments in the outbreak of respiratory illness caused by a novel (new) coronavirus, COVID-19. Vermont is responding to protect and support Vermonters. Everyone has a role in keeping our community healthy, and that includes our business partners in food and lodging establishments.

Everyday Preventive Measures

Person-to-person spread of the virus is thought to occur mainly via respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes. Much is still unknown about how the virus spreads. Take these everyday preventive actions to help stop the spread of germs:

- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Stay home when you are sick.
- Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces.

Stay home when sick

- Employees who have symptoms of acute respiratory illness are recommended to stay home and not come to work until they are free of fever (100.4° F [37.8° C] or greater using an oral thermometer), signs of a fever, and any other symptoms for at least 24 hours, without the use of fever-reducing or other symptom-altering medicines (e.g. cough suppressants). Employees should notify their supervisor and stay home if they are sick.
- Ensure that your sick leave policy makes it easy for employees to stay home if they need to. Make sure employees know these policies and understand your expectations.
- Make sure supervisors send employees home if they are sick.
- Plan for absenteeism by identifying essential functions and creating plans for continuity of operations.
- Cross-train staff to perform essential functions so you can operate if key people are absent.
- Consider what you need to maintain critical operations (identify alternative suppliers, prioritize customers, temporarily suspend some operations, if needed).

Promote proper handwashing

- Make sure handwashing signs are put where employees can see them.
- Wash hands thoroughly with soap and warm water for at least 20 seconds.
- Dry hands with paper towels and throw the paper towels in the trash.

Remember to wash hands:

- After coughing, sneezing, and wiping your nose.
- After using the bathroom.
- When preparing foods.
- When switching from preparing uncooked foods to working with ready-to-eat foods.
- After touching your face or hair.
- After touching animals.
- After eating and using tobacco/nicotine.
- After handling money or other forms of payment.
- After handling dirty equipment or utensils.
- Before putting on disposable gloves.
- Whenever hands become dirty.

Use routine cleaning procedures

Special processes beyond routine cleaning and sanitizing are not recommended at this time.

- Remember, cleaning and sanitizing are not the same. Clean with soap and water to remove dirt and food from surfaces. Sanitize with chemicals or heat to reduce germs. Surfaces that look clean may still have germs on them that you can't see. Sanitizing reduces these germs to safer levels.
- Clean and sanitize surfaces that are frequently touched. Surfaces such as remote controls, kitchen counters, doorknobs, bathroom surfaces, keyboards, tables and chairs, and phones and tablets should be cleaned often.
- Follow the instructions on your cleaner for how long the surface needs to remain wet for it to be effective.
- Food-contact surfaces should be washed, rinsed, and sanitized after each use.

- If you use disinfectant wipes, use according to package directions. Do not reuse the wipes to wipe down multiple surfaces. Throw used wipes in the trash.

Protect your customers

- Keep restrooms stocked with soap and towels or hand dryers.
- Make sure alcohol-based hand sanitizer is available for customers to use, especially if there is no soap and water.
- Be sure to clean and sanitize any objects or surfaces customers may touch, including restroom surfaces, menus, condiments, etc.

Resources

The Vermont Department of Health website contains guidance and answers to frequently asked questions. View these resources at healthvermont.gov/covid19

The CDC is regularly updating its guidance at cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV/summary.html.